

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: SOWETO STUDENT MOVEMENT IN DISARRAY

1. REPORTS FROM STUDENT LEADERSHIP REMAINING IN SOWETO INDICATE THAT THE SOWETO STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (SSRC) HAS SUFFERED SERIOUS LOSSES AND, IN THE WORDS OF PERHAPS THE LAST REMAINING MEMBER OF THE ORIGINAL MASHININI GROUP, THE ATTITUDE SEEMS TO BE ONE OF "SURRENDER".

2. THE LAST CHAIRMAN OF THE SSRC IS REPORTED TO HAVE FLED TO SWAZILAND OVER THE WEEKEND BECAUSE HE WAS ALLEGEDLY BEING SOUGHT BY THE POLICE. HOWEVER, ANOTHER DISGRUNTLED STUDENT LEADER ASSERTS THAT THIS WAS NOT NECESSARY, ALTHOUGH CONCEDING THAT PERHAPS THE POLICE WERE LOOKING FOR HIM. THE STUDENT

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MOVEMENT IS ALMOST ENTIRELY WITHOUT FUNDS IN SPITE OF VIGOROUS ATTEMPTS TO CONVINCE THE USG, SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, UNIDENTIFIED BRITISH SOURCES, EXTERNAL BLACK PEOPLES CONVENTION, AND OTHER SOURCES TO CONTRIBUTE MONIES.

3. STUDENTS APPEAR TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT CLOSING OF SOWETO SCHOOLS, WHILE AT ONCE THEIR GREATEST SUCCESS, HAS

ALSO DEPRIVED THEM OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL BASE. STUDENTS APPEAR TO HAVE LOST INTEREST IN ENGAGING IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE FACE OF ARREST AND INDEED THERE SEEMS TO BE A MAJOR DROP OFF OF NUMBERS OF STUDENTS SEEKING EXILE IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS BOTSWANA, SWAZILAND AND LESOTHO. WIDELY CIRCULATED STORIES ABOUT THE INDIFFERENT HANDLING OF STUDENT REFUGEES HAS FINALLY CONVINCED MANY WOULD-BE REFUGEES THAT PROPECTS FOR GAINING SCHOLARSHIPS ABROAD OR FOLLOWING IN THE WELL-PUBLICIZED FOOTSTEPS OF STUDENT LEADERS SUCH AS MASHININI AND SEATHLOLO WERE POOR.

4. IN THAT REGARD, IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT SEATHLOLO AND MASHININI HAVE RETURNED TO NIGERIA AND ARE APPARENTLY BEING SUPPORTED BY THE OBSANJO GOVERNMENT. SEATHLOLO ALSO WAS REPORTED, ALONG WITH EXILED TRADE UNIONIST DRAKE KOKA, IN GABORONE OVER CHRISTMAS FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH REFUGEE STUDENTS. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SOWETO AND EXILED STUDENTS APPARENTLY REMAINS REASONABLY OPEN AS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT SEVERAL SOWETO LEADERS TRAVELED TO GABORONE OVER CHRISTMAS FOR TALKS WITH SEATHLOLO THERE. ONE RETURNING STUDENT CLAIMS SEATHLOLO AND MASHININI HAVE THROWN IN THEIR LOT WITH THE ANC, ALTHOUGH THE OVERALL IMPRESSION GAINED FROM OTHER STUDENTS SEEMS TO BE THAT AS SUCH DISORGANIZATION AND LACK OF PURPOSE EXIST AMONG EXILES AS APPEARS TO BE THE CASE IN SOWETO.

5. IN CONCLUSION, WHILE NOT FEELING IT SAFE TO PREDICT THE
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COMPLETE COLLAPSE OF THE SOWETO STUDENT MOVEMENT, IT APPEARS THE GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN OF OCTOBER 19, COUPLED WITH THE CONTINUING SCHOOL BOYCOTT, HAS NEGATED MUCH OF THE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY WHICH THE SSRC AT ONE TIME SO FORCIBLY DISPLAYED. WITHOUT, OF COURSE, BEING FULLY AWARE OF ALL ASPECTS OF RE-MAINING ACTIVITY WITHIN THE SSRC FOLD, IT APPEARS THAT ONLY ONE LEADER OF ANY CAPABILITY REMAINS AND HE HAS OFTEN COMMENTED ON HIS DISCOURAGEMENT OVER THE APPARENT HOPELESSNESS OF REGAINING THE INITIATIVE.

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